DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 037 201 JC 700 055

AUTHOR	Blai, Boris, Jr.
TITLE	The Experimental School Calendar.
INSTITUTION	Harcum Junior Coll., Bryn Mawr, Pa.
PUB DATE	Feb 70
NOTE	8p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.50
DESCRIPTORS	*Junior Colleges, *School Calendars, *Semester Division, Student Opinion, Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS	Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

An experimental calendar was adopted at Harcum Junior College (Pennsylvania) for 1969-70. Under this plan, the first semester ended before Christmas; a 4-week recess followed. The length of class periods was extended from 50 to 60 minutes. A poll of student, faculty, and administrative opinion showed that a majority favored the new calendar. Faculty and student comments were summarized. (MS)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

HARCUM JUNIOR COLLEGE
BRYN MAWR, PENNA. 19010

ED037201

THE EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOL CALENDAR

1. The school year 1969-1970 was scheduled using a new academic year calendar system, which provides four weeks mid-year recess between Christmas and the beginning of the second semester. Also, to assure students equal benefits of the previous longer semester which has been curtailed in this new arrangement, the length of class periods was increased from 50 to 60 minutes.

2. Among the views suggesting the desirability of this change are:
   (1) Elimination of the "lame duck" session after Christmas.
   (2) A natural break-off point.
   (3) Concluding the first semester at Christmas might well elicit a higher crescendo and stimulate a higher level of motivation in student study habits.
   (4) The considerable economic factor of eliminating the expense of an additional round trip fare between college and home, since many of the students (approximately 70%) are residents living outside of the normal commuting area of the college.

3. Since this new calendar plan has been regarded as experimental for this first year, the views of those directly concerned with the school calendar were obtained through an anonymous questionnaire circulated to the students, faculty and administrative personnel in December 1969. The results are summarized in the following tabulation and comments; all figures being rounded off to the nearest whole number.

Table 1. Student Faculty Administration School Calendar Views

Length of recess	Too Long		About Right		Too Short	
Questionnaire Item (below)	A	B	A	B	A	B
Present Recess is:	15%	20%	80%	80%	5%	0%
Present Length of Class Periods is:	49%	40%	49%	53%	2%	7%
	Longer		Same		Shorter	
Recommend Next Year Recess be:	12%	0%	75%	86%	13%	14%

A = Students (N=280) 47% of total
B = Faculty-Admin. (N=15) 30% of total

JC 700 055

4. (a) As Table 1 clearly reveals, a preponderant majority of both students (80%) and faculty-administration respondents (80%) consider the present inter-session absence "About Right"; with no more than 1/5th of either group considering the period "Too Long".

(b) With reference to the present length (60 minute or 90 minute) class periods, about half of each group consider the length "About Right" with approximately half of each group (students 49%, faculty-administration 40%) expressing the view that the length of class periods was "Too Long".

(c) Regarding recommendations for next academic year inter-session, a preponderant majority, (students 75%, faculty-administration 86%) favor the present arrangement.

(d) With virtually a majority of both students and faculty-administration favoring both the present class period lengths and inter-session break period, it is recommended that the present pattern be retained on a non-experimental basis for academic 1970-1971 and future years, until or unless compelling evidence arises to consider modifying the current year school calendar plan.

5. Faculty comments regarding the questionnaire items follow:

"The present between semesters vacation is:"

Too Long

(1) The students seem to lose some of their momentum and find it difficult to re-establish study habits.

About Right

(1) Opportunity to travel. Enough time to return refreshed.
(2) It permits faculty sufficient time to organize and prepare for the coming semester.
(3) Combining semester break and vacation provides complete rest from all duties.
(4) Good fishing time!
(5) For many girls attending Harcum the opportunity to obtain job interviews during a prolonged break during senior year is important.
(6) Time to enjoy the holiday season; recover from speed-up calendar and prepare for next semester.
(7) There is an opportunity to relax, read and reflect.
(8) Good opportunity to fortify yourself and include a vacation (if you can afford it).

The following comments were made by one faculty member. "You will note I am opposed to the present arrangement of length of semester, length of class periods, and perhaps the length of vacations. The school year needs to be better balanced! I can't answer any of these questions. I believe they are the wrong questions!! We should be asking questions about the calendar and length of the semesters rather than vacations! In asking questions about vacations and class periods we are starting at the wrong end - all of this relates to the calendar - when classes begin and end each semester. This question needs to be answered

first - how long should the semester be relative to the objectives of the school? Then length of class period, time and length of vacations should be considered. Another question is - when is the appropriate time for the "Spring" vacation."

"The longer class periods telescope the time - especially in the first semester. Extra-curricular activities, appropriate committee meetings and others, suffer because of lack of flexibility and availability of 7 and 8 periods in this class day - as was formerly the case. 100 minutes with a 10 minute intermission (or 90 minutes) are somewhat long for our present students. I wonder if our scheduling practices would stand investigation as to their relationship to student learning - minutes do not guarantee learning!"

"Further - a great part of the time between semesters was not vacation! Preparing syllabi, etc. took much time of many faculty members."

"There are other alternatives to the calendar - tri-mester is one; starting earlier in the fall so as to have 50 minute periods on M W F and 75 minutes on T Th is another."

"It is not clear to me, yet, why the present calendar was suggested. If it was for academic reasons; or for financial reasons. If the first, it does not seem to have succeeded. If the latter, then more consideration should be given to a calendar that will be both academically and financially satisfactory."

"The longer periods rush the students too much. Learning takes time! Further, other schools finish by Christmas; start somewhat earlier and have 50 minute and 75 minute perids."

"We need to reduce the daily pressure on the students, and perhaps on the teachers and administrators."

"I recommend next year's between semester vacation period be:"

Same

(1) Good fishing.
(2) I like the combined Christmas and semester break time.

Shorter

(1) 2 weeks
(2) Cut off a week

"Do you have any other comments about the between semesters vacation period" ?

(1) Once the college is adjusted to the shortened semester, the inherent value of the calendar will be increasingly evident.
(2) It is my impression that many colleges are thinking about instituting a long break at Christmas.
(3) For the faculty it would be an ideal time to have departmental workshops.

"What are your views regarding the present length of class periods?"

Too Long

(1) Because each 24 hour day is too short for proper learning for the student. However, the long period (this year) are tied in with the semester length.
(2) T Th classes are longer than student attention span.
(3) I personally prefer the 50 minute period, but I'm sure this preference is a function of habit. I have no strong feelings about the longer periods. Any school calendar has shortcomings. I believe that the current calendar overcomes many of the problems of the previous one. Educationally, the more concentrated semester is superior. We must adjust our assignments and academic demands to be consonant with what can be reasonably expected in the shorter period.
(4) 1 hour and 30 minute periods twice a week is too long. Will ultimately prevent work from being effectively covered. The 60 minute period is fine.
(5) Should all be 60 minute maximum.
(6) Attention span of the students not long enough for this type scheduling.
(7) Our students need smaller amounts of information at one time if they are to understand the material thoroughly. Their attention span is relatively short, and thus it would be better to have shorter periods. But, if this approach is used, the semester should be longer, not the length of the class day.

About Right

(1) Allows time for passing and collecting supplies. Teaches the value of a 60 minute hour!
(2) Adequately suits my subject field.
(3) Additional time allows more discussion time during the lecture.
(4) We need the time in studio work.
(5) Time for details, teaching and discussion.
(6) Attention good; possible to teach without feeling rushed.
(7) Fine because class participation can be accommodated to include everyone.

6. Summarized student comments regarding the questionnaire items follows. They are listed in descending order of frequency.

"The present between semesters vacation is: "

Too Long

(1) Boring - 28
(2) Hard to return to studying after this long break - 9.
(3) Prefer starting 2 weeks later in September and having 2 week less vacation break - 3.

About Right

(1) Enough time to really rest and relax - 45
(2) For vacation traveling and doing the things you want to - 35
(3) Like having exams before vacation - 29
(4) Boring if longer - 28
(5) Enough time to take a job - 25
(6) Ready to return - 21
(7) Just great! - 16
(8) Better to be off earlier before Christmas and come back a week earlier; still having 4 weeks - 6

"Do you have any other comments about the between semester vacation period?"

(1) I feel it is much better to have the vacation longer and having finals before Christmas.
(2) It is my first experience, since at home we only have two weeks winter vacation.
(3) Instead of 2 weeks after New Year, there should be one before Christmas week and one after New Years.
(4) I think it was good.
(5) I got bored.
(6) I like having exams early rather than having them when vacation is over.
(7) A slightly longer vacation would also make it possible for students to work in between semesters.
(8) It's good if you get a job - but otherwise all your friends from home go back to school and it leaves nothing to be done.
(9) It could be longer.
(10) I liked this because exams were over with and forgotten when vacation started: No worries!
(11) Should run a school session for people to pick up extra credits.
(12) It's much better to have final exams first and then the vacation. That way there is nothing to worry about.
(13) The idea that we do have finals before Christmas vacation is much better.
(14) Go home two weeks before Christmas
(15) 4 weeks is time for rest from the past semester and get ready for the next.
(16) We should be given one day of adjustment back to school.
(17) I prefer having finals before Christmas.
(18) I like having exams before the vacation.
(19) The present system is good for those who must travel by plane.
(20) To keep having the exams before vacation.
(21) It was a very good rest, and by the time it was over most people were ready to come back.
(22) They should be more in line with other college's vacation days.

(23) I don't think we shoud start school the day we get back from vacation.
(24) It would be better if the 4 weeks were split into two 2 week vacations.
(25) Most colleges do have the same amount of time except not right in a row; they go back to have exams, but I like our system better.
(26) It is a good idea to have it after finals.
(27) Yes, we should be able to come back to school to spend some time if desired.
(28) It's better to have exams before vacation - it's a good system.
(29) I thought it was a good length.
(30) I think its great.
(31) Start earlier; end sooner.
(32) It would be appreciated if we received the list of books we will need so we can research the subject.
(33) You could not find Christmas jobs because we got out too late to help for Christmas and then we had a month in Jan. when they didn't need us anyway.
(34) Let us know what term papers are needed so some kids can do reading over vacation for a head start.
(35) Just make it a week shorter and let us out the first week in May.
(36) It was a great recuperation period.
(37) I really liked the vacation. It gives a person time if they wanted to work.
(38) It was good having exams before vacation - your mind can be free.
(39) I thought it was great having our exams before vacation.
(40) It was great because you didn't have to spend your Christmas vacation studying.
(41) Just continue to have exams before vacation.
(42) The idea of exams before vacation is a very wise one indeed. To push all work out of the way for relaxation is needed for the student body.
(43) Having the exams before vacation was a good idea. Relieves the tension during vacation.
(44) It was very good in many ways other than not having to worry about examinations.
(45) I like having exams before vacation - that way they are out of the way and nothing pressuring you when you come back.
(46) One week during the spring would serve a better purpose than dragging it out over Xmas vacation.
(47) It was good to have exams before vacation because you then didn't have to study and worry.
(48) I like exams before vacation.
(49) Exams should remain before vacation.
(50) Exams should be before Xmas - to be free of worries.
(51) I think the break was just the right length. Also I liked the idea of having exams before.

(52) Vacation period right length. Like having finals before vacation.
(53) I fully approve of having exams before vacation.
(54) Like final exams before vacation.
(55) It's better to have exams before break.
(56) I like exams before break.
(57) I think the length of vacation is just right.
(58) I think it is much better to have exams before vacation.
(59) It is a welcome break.
(60) Approve of exams before vacation.
(61) Exams before vacation are just great.
(62) I think it's 100% better to finish exams before vacation.
(63) It is very good - having exams before break.
(64) Any shorter wouldn't be good.
(65) My suggestion is that we get out a week earlier and return a week earlier than we did.
(66) I like having finals before exams.

It is clearly evident from the comments offered that having exams before vacation is by far the most popular reason for having the semester end before Christmas-intersession break.

7. Student comments regarding their views about the present length of class periods included:

Too Long

(1) Hour and forty minute classes are too long - they drag.
(2) It depends on the teacher
(3) 90 minutes are too long
(4) 1 1/2 hours too long - and boring
(5) Hour and a half class too long
(6) 1 1/2 hour lectures are terrible!
(7) Hard to sit in class for so long.
(8) Should be no more than 1 hour long
(9) Too long to hold interest
(10) Should be 45-50 minutes. An hour becomes dull and boring.
(11) Attention Span is not that long.
(12) Should be 45 minutes

The additional 125 "too long" respondents indicated the same general comments; becomes boring when more than an hour.

About Right

(1) One hour classes are fine.
(2) It depends on the interest you have in the class - but in general the present length of time is OK.
(3) Long enough to make class interesting.

Too Short

(1) There should be 15 minute breaks between classes to give you enough time to finish a cigarette, look over your notes, and talk to friends.
(2) I'd like to have more 1 1/2 hour period classes each week.
(3) I feel that all classes should be 1 1/2 hours. You accomplish more and I don't have to review as often, the same things you discussed last period.
(4) Quantitative analysis class too short to get all of the work done.

Boris Blai, Jr. Ed.D.
Director of Research

February 1970

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

FEB 20 1970

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE
FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES